

Episode 57DHXi July 19 2025 Sun Day September 21 2025 Why the Trump War on Solar Power Will Fail

Why the Trump War on Solar Power Will Fail Excerpts edited for brevity and clarity by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times July 18 2025 Article by Bill McKibben the author of the forthcoming book Here Comes the Sun and the founder of Sun Day an event on September 21 2025 to celebrate sun and wind power In 1980 President Jimmy Carter proposed funding to help America get 20 percent of its energy from the sun by the year 2000 But then his successor Ronald Reagan shut down that process going so far as to rip the solar panels off the White House roof It took more than 35 years to get us back on track with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act I R A in 2022 under President Joe Biden Under Trump even though the damage from the congressional action will be very deep it almost will not last as long this time For one it was not until 1988 the Reagan last year in office that the scientist James Hansen turned global warming into a political issue by declaring before Congress that there was an irrefutable connection between greenhouse gas emissions and the increase in the temperatures of the earth The Trump administration scoffs at climate science of course but events will continue to make climate science relevant Secondly wise policies in places like Germany and China touched off an engineering miracle that has lowered the cost of solar panels 99 percent since 1980 For the past three or four years we have lived on a planet where the cheapest way to generate energy is to point a sheet of glass at the sun Australia shows the way on rooftop solar Most estimates of the cost of the recent Trump legislation include more than 100 dollars a year in extra electricity costs for American families because we stay dependent on natural gas Last year almost 96 percent of new electricity generation globally came from sun and wind technologies and batteries India where coal fired power declined 3 percent in the first half of the year announced on Monday that it had met its 2030 goal of providing half its electric capacity from renewables five years early China installed almost 100 solar panels a second in May smashing its record Even Poland the heart of the European lignite belt got more of its electricity from renewables in May than from coal You would say this is good news unless you owned an oil or gas company or a coal mine Then you would understand it as a threat to your business model and you might try to use your existing cash flow to game the system You may recall that during his campaign President Trump reportedly told the oil barons of America that if they donated 1 billion dollars to help elect him they could get a lot of what they wanted In the end they spent nearly half a billion in donations lobbying and advertising during the election cycle and that apparently was enough to very nearly win them carte blanche Not only is the administration removing environmental regulations on oil and gas drilling and pulling the funding from anything remotely green it is also using the threat of tariffs to bully countries into buying the natural gas of America It is an effort to slow down an inevitable transition I believe it is inevitable that our country will eventually follow the rest of the world and that in 40 or so years America will run mainly on sun and wind The problem though is that if it takes us anything like 40 years then the world that runs on sun and wind will be catastrophically hot Some of us are busy organizing a nationwide event called Sun Day on September 21 There will be electric vehicle parades and solar powered concerts ribbon cuttings at solar farms and protests at city halls and state houses demanding that they take the lead in shifting policies to make the energy transition easier There is an enormous amount that can be done in red states as well as blue Texas leads the country in clean energy installation Utah this winter became the first state in the nation to permit balcony solar the small scale units that hang from the verandas of millions of European apartments Sun and wind are no longer alternative energy but the obvious path forward The

force of economic gravity that is finally on the side of clean energy Polls show that many people despite every effort of the MAGA right the American people continue to love the idea of solar power

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